

can be enacted. We can collectively achieve a great victory in the preservation of something that we all support.

My home State of Wyoming is now famous for its parks—Yellowstone, Teton, Devils Tower. Like most Americans, I take great pride in those. So we want to set a standard for national parks for the 21st century. We have invited, of course, the administration to join with us. Among other things, I have sent a letter to the President asking that he appoint a park director. There is not one now. In order to have some plans and work together, we do need some leadership there.

I am suggesting and want my colleagues to know I am prepared to undertake this issue, and together we can cause something constructive to happen. We have a great opportunity. The time is now, the time is right, and I am willing to work any time with anyone to bring the National Park Service into the 21st century alive, vibrant, efficient, effective, and lasting, more importantly, an agency that would provide excellent service to visitors and provide excellent service to the resource. We can do that.

Mr. President, I thank you, and I yield the floor.

Mr. CRAIG addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, let me thank my colleague from Wyoming for his statement and his sincere commitment to our National Park System. As chairman of the Parks Subcommittee of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, he offers this country tremendous leadership in the area of parks and park management. I am sure his statement this morning is well received and clearly demonstrates some of the difficulties our Park Service now experiences that this Congress ought to be actively and responsibly dealing with.

(The remarks of Mr. CRAIG pertaining to the introduction of legislation are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. GRAMS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

MINNESOTA FLOODS

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss my visit to Minnesota last week to see firsthand the floods that have ravaged my State, as well as North and South Dakota, and the damage left behind in the water's wake. For the many Minnesotans who live and work in counties devastated by these floods, this continues to be a very difficult and emotional time.

Let me say first that President Clinton has approved the request of Minnesota Governor Arne Carlson to declare an additional 25 counties a major disaster area. That would help to bring to 46 the total number of counties eligible to receive Federal disaster assistance.

As Governor Carlson said in making his request to the President, this assistance will help to get people back into their homes.

The worst may not be over for many Minnesotans, however, especially those in the Red River Valley. Upstream on the Red River at Breckenridge, over 400 people were evacuated yesterday from the southern section of the community. It appears that the river may have stopped rising, and efforts will continue today to try and save the rest of the city.

There is still the danger that the river might crest all at once from Wahpeton south of Fargo to Grand Forks on the north because of water created by melting snow.

Last Thursday, I traveled with Senators CONRAD and DORGAN of North Dakota, Senator WELLSTONE of Minnesota, and other members of the congressional delegation, along with James Lee Witt, the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Administration, to the cities of Ada, Moorhead, and many others. I traveled the next day with Vice President AL GORE to survey the damage in Breckenridge and elsewhere in western Minnesota.

On Saturday, I visited Red Cross and emergency service centers with Minnesota Lieutenant Governor Joanne Benson. At each stop over those 3 days, we witnessed widespread devastation and the strength of Minnesota's community spirit, as we spoke with many citizens whose lives have been turned upside down by the floods.

The disastrous flooding has severely disrupted the lives of many Minnesotans. Dreams of enjoying warm spring weather after a brutally long Minnesota winter has been replaced with efforts to ensure families and communities are safe and that adequate food, water, and shelter is available.

I am pleased that both State and Federal tax filing deadlines have been extended for those taxpayers living within the disaster areas.

Later this week, I will introduce legislation modeled after a bill I signed into law during the Midwest floods of 1993 to help ease lending regulations in those disaster-declared areas as well. This will make it easier for the restructuring of loans and prevent unnecessary foreclosures on farmers and other small businesses. The flooding—and the snow, the ice, and the cold that made relief efforts extremely difficult—has been an exhausting nightmare for those who are in it, and it has been agonizing for the rest of the Nation to watch. The Minnesotans I met with at the flood sites we traveled to have been tested time and time again.

The floods of 1997 are creating an agricultural disaster as well. While hard numbers do not exist yet, more than 2 million acres of Minnesota cropland are now under water, affecting thousands of farms, and all of Wilkin County's 400,000 acres of cropland are flooded. In Clay County, it is 200,000 acres under water.

It has been estimated that farmers who already lost more than \$100 million due to the blizzards that caused the floods could now have flood losses totaling over \$1 billion.

Dairy farmers have been hit especially hard, forcing them to dump hundreds of thousands of pounds of milk because milk trucks could not reach them. The biggest problem has been getting out to the farms that are surrounded by water.

Spring planting, which is normally just 2 weeks away, will be a problem in parts of southern Minnesota. Along the Red River Valley, more than 40 percent of the sugar beet crop is normally planted by the end of April. No one will be planting by then this year.

According to the National Weather Service, flood warnings remain in effect until April 20 along the Mississippi from St. Paul to Red Wing, as well as for portions of the St. Croix and the Minnesota rivers.

Red Cross volunteers have begun to close emergency shelters and are now distributing flood cleanup kits. By the end of last week, the Red Cross had served more than 55,000 meals to sandbaggers and those people in shelters.

While tough times are still ahead, I was moved by Minnesotans coming together for the common goal of protecting and cleaning up their communities.

In Ada, people are tense, weary from days of flood relief work, and still shaken by their losses. For those lucky enough to remain in their homes, the loss of heat and electricity were devastating in the harsh, winter-like conditions.

You may have read the story of Ada residents Warren and Colleen Goltz. Although the Goltzes lost electricity as water in a nearby drainage ditch began to rise, they decided to stay in their house. Four feet of water seeped into the basement, ruining many of their possessions.

They burned old newspapers in the fireplace to keep warm, but the temperature fell to 38 degrees. Finally, a friend arrived with a generator, another dropped off firewood, and another opened his house so they could use the phone.

As Rev. Earl Schmidt of the Zion Lutheran Church of Ada said, "It's going to make us much more caring for each other. I hope it makes us look to God more, obviously. And it's given us a quick lesson in survival."

We have been inspired once again by people of Minnesota, who have rallied together for their communities as they always do when tragedy strikes. It is during critical times such as these that we finally understand the importance of neighbor helping neighbor.

At a time when we rarely make the effort to get to know and appreciate our neighbors, Minnesotans in a great many of our communities have formed lasting bonds over this past week and found their civic spirit had been restored.

Mr. President, I was equally impressed with the efforts of Minnesota's

young people. All too often we hear and read about young people who are not responsible, who do not care about their community.

Last week, I witnessed countless occasions when young and old worked together, filling and hauling sandbags, feeding those who had lost their homes, and finding them shelter. They set a remarkable example for the rest of the Nation.

Much work has been done, but the most difficult work is yet to be accomplished, and that will be the cleanup that takes place over the next few months, after the news crews have moved on, the TV cameras have been hauled away, and the spotlight has shifted to another part of the country.

I will be working with the Governor's office and with local officials to ensure that available Federal assistance will be distributed to those counties that so desperately need it.

Mr. President, last week I witnessed neighbor helping neighbor and volunteers working side by side to help save their communities. It is this kind of determination that will lead people through these difficult times, as we deal with what one Minnesotan described as "a flood frozen in place."

Thank you very much, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

Mr. DORGAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, we have reserved an hour, I believe, in morning business. Is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, a number of my colleagues will be on the floor presently. I would like to begin the hour and will be yielding time to some of my colleagues. But I do want to follow, in the first 5 minutes or so, the remarks of the Senator from Minnesota, Senator GRAMS, on the issue of flooding.

We intend, during this hour, to talk about the chemical weapons treaty and the critical vote that will be coming up on that in the Senate next week on that issue. I will get to that.

FLOODING IN THE NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, first, let me respond to the issue of flooding. The Senator from Minnesota said it very well. I was with him as we toured part of the Red River Valley last week.

The Red River, which is one of the only rivers that I know of that flows north, flows into a watershed up north that is still frozen. The Red River often has problems with flooding. We often cope with the challenges of dealing with a flood in the Red River. But this is a flood of historic proportions, a century flood, on the heels of a winter in which we had five to seven blizzards, the last of which a week and a half ago put, in many cases, up to 20 inches of snow in our region.

A massive flood, the worst blizzard in 50 years, massive power outages all around the region, and then you understand a little about the challenges faced by people in the Northern Great Plains.

This has been very, very difficult. The Red River today has turned into a lake that is now 200 miles long. If you fly over it, it is almost inappropriate to characterize it as a river. It is a 200-mile lake that is held in by the heroic efforts of some people to fill bags with sand and stack them on top of each other and hope that that sandbagging will keep water from their homesteads, their farms or their houses.

Also, there are the heroic efforts of the Corps of Engineers, contracting with wonderful contractors to build emergency dikes. It is some effort in North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota to watch the fight to stem the tide of this difficult flood.

Last weekend, I was in a shelter in Grafton, ND, where people had gone in order to seek refuge. They had been for days without any electricity in their homes. An 89-year-old woman living alone in her home had finally decided, "I must go to a shelter." I talked to her, and typical of the tough, gritty Norwegian and German stock in North Dakota, she said, well, it was not so bad, that, you know, she was getting through it—89 years old, no complaints, fighting the flood, fighting the elements, living in a shelter, but she knew that we would get through this. And that is the spirit that exists in our part of the country.

There was a woman in north Fargo named Sylvia Hove. Just before I left, to come back to the Senate here in DC for votes this week, I stopped by Sylvia's house. The amount of diking they had to do to keep the wall of water out from the back of her house and her backyard is truly extraordinary. Then, at 4 o'clock in the morning, with this very tall dike that they had built—and I helped pile some of the sandbags on that dike the week previous—the dike springs a leak.

Sylvia's son, who is there from out of State, hailed down a policeman. The policeman put out the alert on the radio. And at 4 o'clock in the morning there were four policemen there, just like that. The policemen routed their cars, stacking sandbags, dealing with the leak in the dike until others came.

It is the way that neighbors have helped neighbors, and, yes, in Minnesota, in Breckenridge, the North Dakota side, all up and down, especially the valley, the Red River Valley in North Dakota and Minnesota.

Unfortunately, this is a flood that comes and stays. Most floods we see on television are some raging river, completely out of control, taking houses with it down the middle of the stream. That is not the way the flood on the Red River occurs. It is a river that runs north; it runs very, very slow. It has a very insignificant grade, and the result is the crest comes but the flood will stay for a long, long while.

They will be fighting the flood in North Dakota and Minnesota yet for some weeks. It is truly a very significant challenge and a heroic effort on the part of mayors and city councils and young people and old folks and just ordinary folks who are doing extraordinary things to try to deal with this calamity.

I was at a sandbagging operation in Grand Forks. They put out a call for volunteers. I went into this giant area where they have two big sandbagging operations. There must have been 200 volunteers there ranging from 15 years old, I think, probably to 80 years old, all of them working hard piling sandbags on trucks. It really is quite an extraordinary thing to see.

There are a couple of outstanding issues. The head of the Corps of Engineers, Colonel Wonsik, called me last evening at home and gave me a description of where we are with respect to Wahpeton and Breckenridge, Fargo, Grand Forks, Grafton, Drayton, Pembina, all the way up and down the valley. He feels that they are making some progress, but it is an enormous challenge.

The mayor of Fargo called me about an hour ago. Again, it is an enormous challenge, but they are fighting a significant battle. All of the preparation they are doing is preventing the enormous damage that could have been done had we not had the diking that is now in place.

Some have asked the question about the emergency help that is going to be available on a 75 percent/25 percent ratio, 75 percent Federal, 25 percent State and local. The Governor had asked for a 90-10 ratio. I will just observe on that point the folks in FEMA and the administration have a formula: If the damage in a region goes above \$40 million, then they go to a 90-10 formula. That will almost certainly occur in our region, probably has already occurred. That will be retroactive. So it is almost certain that our region will have this 90-10 formula in which the rest of the country reaches out in a disaster to say, we are here to help you, just as we have reached out on earthquakes and tornadoes and floods in other regions of our country. So that is something that is important.

Second, the Internal Revenue Service has been very helpful. As you know, there was a traffic jam in the District of Columbia last night; people at midnight trying to post their income tax returns on time. The Internal Revenue Service extended the date for filing to May 30 in the Dakotas and Minnesota where disaster has been declared. That is going to be helpful. They indicated they did not have authority to waive the interest charge during that 45-day extension.

I introduced a piece of legislation last evening in the Senate to waive that interest charge. It seems to me if the IRS says—and I appreciate the fact they have said it—that a tax return will be timely filed if it is filed by May